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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of movable adverbs in Mandarin Chinese. In terms of their position within a sentence, most Mandarin adverbs can be classified as movable or non-movable. While identification of either class may be based on their semantic categories or on the number of syllables, the motivation for placing a movable adverb in front of the subject rather than in front of the predicate gives prominence to its conjunctive function in discourse. The paper claims that moving an adverb to the front of a clause is a process of grammaticalization. As clause connectives generally occur between clauses, a constituent that is placed in the pre-subject position is more likely to take on a conjunctive function than anything else in that clause or in a preceding clause. Evidence supporting this claim comes from the usage of pairs such as "ke" and "keshi," and "jiu" and "jiushi." Their cognitive and structural characteristics fit snugly into the resultant features of grammaticalization, namely overlapping, asymmetry, decategorization, recategorization, and grammaticalization chain. (Contains 11 references.) (MDM)

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Movable Adverbs, Conjunctions and Grammaticalization of Conjunctive Functions

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ABSTRACT

In terms of their positions in a sentence, most Mandarin adverbs can be classified as movable or non-movable adverbs (Li & Thompson, 1981:320-340). While identification of either class may be based on their semantic categories or on the number of syllables, the motivation for placing a movable adverb in front of the subject rather than in front of the predicate is said to give prominence to its conjunctive function in discourse (Chu, 1991).

This paper further claims that moving an adverb to the front of a clause is a process of grammaticalization of the adverb's discourse function (Heine et al, 1991; Hopper and Traugott, 1993). As clause connectives generally occur between clauses, a constituent that is placed in the pre-subject position is more likely to take on a conjunctive function than anything else in that clause or in a preceding clause. Evidence supporting the claim comes from pairs like ke and keshi, and jiu and jiushi. Their cognitive and structural characteristics fit snugly into the resultant features of grammaticalization: overlapping, asymmetry, decategorization, recategorization and grammaticalization chain (Heine, 1992).

Two pedagogical implications are derivable from the observations: (a) Teach adverbs as conjunctions when their conjunctive function dominates their adverbial function, and (b) Stress the fact that in Mandarin crucial conjunctive functions more often reside in markers in the main (usually, the second) clause rather than in the subordinate (usually, the first) clause.

I. Movables vs. Non-Movables

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It is generally accepted that Mandarin adverbs can be recognized as movable and non-movable in terms of their syntactic behavior (Li and Thompson, 1981: 320-340). The usual criterion for identification is that polysyllabic adverbs are movable while monosyllabic ones are not. Besides, there is also some semantic correlation: the movable ones are generally temporal and attitudinal adverbs while the non-movable ones are generally manner adverbs. But this correlation is not perfect in that non-manners may just as non-movable as manners: yijing 'already', yizhi 'straight', chang 'often', zao 'early, you 'again', zai 'again', jiu 'then; at once', zhi 'only', cai 'only then; just now', hai 'still', ye 'also', dou 'all', lian...dou/ye 'even', hen 'very'.

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Li and Thompson (1981: 331 & 655-6) also mention that some adverbs may perform connective functions, but no effort is made to relate the movability of adverbs to their connective function.

In fact, a strong case can be made for the relation. Chu (1991), for example, believes that the pre-subject position for an adverb often contributes to the cohesion of a discourse---i.e. adverbs in this position serve the function of a conjunction. One of his examples is given below:

(1.a) Wo mingtian jiu yao ban dao Chen jia qu le.
I tomorrow soon will move to Chen family go LE
'I will move to (stay with) the Chens tomorrow.'

b) Mingtian wo jiu yao ban dao Chen jia qu le.
tomorrow I soon will move to chen family go LE

Sentences (a) and (b) above are synonymous and differ only in the position of the movable adverb of time mingtian 'tomorrow'. Yet, if there is a preceding context like (2) below:

(2) Zai Gancheng zhao fangzi kezhen bu rongyi, huale
at Gan-city look-for housing really not easy, take-LE

wo yige duo xingqi cai zai Chen Jiaoshou jia zhaodao
I a-M more week only at Chen Professor home find

yijian fangjian.
a-M room

'It is very difficult to look for housing in Gainesville. It took me over a week before I found a room at Prof. Chen's.'

then, (1.b) is much more appropriate to follow it than (1.a) is. The reason obviously is that mingtian 'tomorrow' at the clause-initial position is more easily interpreted as a conjunction than otherwise.

Looking through the study on time-expressions as points of reference by Liao (1983:259-263), we find that all such expressions must occur in clause-initial positions in order to serve their proper role, which Liao treats as a cohesive device in discourse. All of them can, of course, just as well occur in the post-subject position in isolated clauses, where no issue of discourse cohesion arises.

II. The Discourse/Conjunctive Function of Clause-Initial Position

To further illustrate the importance of clause-initial position for the explicit use of adverbs as connectives, we give

additional examples below:

(3.a) Wo buguo shi yige laobaixing.
I only BE a-M ordinary-citizen
'I am just an ordinary citizen.'

b) Buguo wo shi yige laobaixing.
but I be a-M ordinary-citizen
'But I am an ordinary citizen.'

The buguo in (3.a) means 'only' and is definitely an adverb while the one in (3.b) means 'but' and performs a conjunctive function. This is made clear when a context is taken into consideration. Sentence (3.a) may be uttered as an independent statement but (3.b) has to follow some previous statement, such as 'Did you say they want to court-martial us?'

Bu[illegible] is one of the few forms in Mandarin that bear distinct meanings in those two positions. Most other conjunctive adverbs cannot be so easily distinguished in meaning when they occur in different positions in a clause. Take xianran 'obviously' for example:

(4) Bie kan ta you shuo you xiao,
don't look he both talk and laugh
'Don't judge him by his talking and laughing,'

(5.a) xianran ta bing bu gaoxing.
obviously he on-the-contrary not happy
'obviously, he's not happy.'

b) ta xianran bing bu gaoxing.
he obviously on-the-contrary not happy
'he obviously is not happy.'

The meanings for the two instances of xianran in (5) are the same: 'obviously'. Yet, sentence (5.a) is much more appropriate than (5.b) to follow (4). The only reason why it is more appropriate is that the clause-initial xianran serves a better conjunctive function.

III. Movement to Clause-Initial Position as a Means of Acquiring Conjunctive Status

There are very few monosyllabic conjunctive adverbs that may occur in the pre-subject position. The sentences below illustrate two of them:

(6.a) Ta meiyou ku, er yanjing yi kanbuqing
he didn't cry, but eye already see-not-clear

mianqiande yiqie. (Fang, 1992:373)

face-front-DE everything

'He didn't cry, but he couldn't see anything right in front of him.'

b) Banzhuren Yao Long Tongzhi yiding yao ta hui
Director Yao Long Comrade certainly want she return

sushe xiuxi, ke Gong Shengying wei kong bu yao ta
dorm rest, yet Gong Shengying only afraid not want she

canjia zheyi zhandou, que zhuangde hen
participate-in this battle, conversely pretend-DE very

shenqide shuo: 'Wo yidian ye bu lei.' (Beida, 1982:304)
energetic-DE say: 'I a-little also not tired'

'Director-Comrade Yao Long insisted that she return to the dorm for a rest, but Gong Shengying, afraid of being excluded from the battle, said with a faked high spirit, "I am not tired at all."'

Both er and ke are regarded as conjunctions carrying the basic meaning of zhuanzhe 'turn', though ke has an added meaning of 'further restriction or supplement', according to Beida (1982).

Here, we would like to compare the ke in (6.b) with the ke in the post-subject position and with keshi as a conjunction. All sentences are taken from Beida (1982), with pages numbers in parentheses.

(7.a) Mama, kuai na chide, ke e huai le. (p. 300)
mother, quick bring eat-DE, KE hungry bad LE
'Mom, bring some food. Quick! I'm just starving.'

b) Haole, wanquan haole. Zhexia wo ke fangxin le. (p300)
good-LE, complete good-LE. this-time I KE not-worry LE
'OK now, completely OK now. Now I don't have to worry any more.'

c) Tongzhimen, diyipao ke yao daxiang a! (p. 301)
comrades, first-shot KE must make-noise A
'Comrades, we must make some noise at this first shot.'

d) Da Shui ke bi shei dou qinjin. (p. 301)
Da Shui KE be who all diligent-careful
'Da Shui is certainly more hard-working and careful than anybody else.'

e) Zheyinian, kuai dao yangli liuyueban, zheli

this-a-year, almost to solar-calendar June-half, here

ke hai kanbujian lu shan. (p. 302)
KE still look-not-see green mountain

'This year, it was almost mid-June and we could not yet see the green mountains.'

(8.a) Zai zuguo yijing shi chuntian le, keshi zai
at mother-country already be spring LE, KESHI at

zher yiqie hai liuzhe dongji de rongmao. (303)
here everything still keep-ZHE winter DE countenance

'It is already spring in my homeland, but here everything still retains its wintry look.'

b) Ziji qu zuan, qu xue, dangran hen zhongyao, keshi
self go study, go learn, of-course very important, KESHI

geng zhongyao de shi youyishide qu peiyang
even-more important DE be purposely go cultivate

fuzhi nianqingde yidai. (p. 304)
foster young generation

'It is, of course, important to study and learn (by ourselves); but it is even more important to (help) cultivate and foster the younger generation.'

There is a quite rich set of meanings expressed by ke in (7). Following Beida (1982:300-304), the ke in (7.a) focuses on the adjectival predicate, the one in (7.b) indicates a finality of the situation, the one in (7.c) adds a necessity interpretation to an imperative, the one in (7.d) expresses a certainty in a narrative, and the one in (7.e) connects two clauses by indicating an inconsistency between them. The last one obviously serves a connective function. In contrast, the pre-subject ke in (6.b) has only the meaning of zhuanzhe 'turn', which can be interpreted as 'expressing a difference from the preceding statement'. It rather represents a chiefly discourse notion with very little semantic content.

Turning to keshi, we observe that, just like the pre-subject ke, it has a relatively impoverished semantic content of 'concession' in (8). Thus, keshi is quite similar to the pre-subject ke both functionally and semantically. At this point, we might ask: Though the two conjunctives ke and keshi may seem very similar, are there any differences between them at all?

If we substitute one for the other in (6.b) and (8), all of them remain as acceptable as before. But we do find some

distinction between the original and the resultant versions: while both (8.a) and (8.b) with ke in place of keshi seems to have an added meaning of 'deliberately delivered unexpectedness', (6.b) with keshi instead of ke loses that 'unexpectedness' force. In other words, ke is semantically somewhat richer than keshi as a connective.

Another experiment we may do is to substitute keshi for the adverbial ke in (7). This results in unacceptable versions in (a) and (b) and suspended utterance without a preceding context in (c) and (d). Only in (e) does there seem to be little discernible difference between the original and the new versions. If there is any difference at all, it is, again, that ke is more forceful in 'deliberately delivered unexpectedness' than keshi is. This indicates that the post-subject ke serving as a conjunctive is not any different from its pre-subject counterpart in either meaning or function.

In sum, keshi has only one meaning/function in both positions but ke can be interpreted in different ways. In the post-subject position ke can either be an adverb or a conjunction. As an adverb, it has various meanings while as a conjunction it has only one meaning. This last meaning is the same as for the one in the pre-subject position. These facts all point to a conclusion that keshr is a full-fledged conjunction whether it occurs in pre- or post-subject position, while ke is less clearly a conjunction for its 'unexpectedness' meaning even when it occurs in the pre-subject position.

This conclusion is further supported by the different ways ke and keshi are treated in linguistic literature. Grammars and dictionaries regard keshi as a conjunction only. While most of them consider ke an adverb, some of them also treat it as a conjunction. One interesting fact is that a reputable Chinese-English dictionary, without recognizing it as a conjunction, gives an example with a conjunctive function under the heading of adverb: (BFLT, 1985:387)

(9) Laodong hen jianku, ke dajia ganjing shizu.
labor very hard, KE all work-spirit solid
'It was hard work, but everybody went at it whole-heartedly.'

Another noteworthy fact is that ke as a conjunction can not be placed in the pre-subject position in Taiwan Mandarin. Since the Mandarin taught and spoken in Taiwan is known to be more conservative, it may be assumed the pre-subject use of ke as a conjunction is a recent innovation.

On the basis of the facts above, we hypothesize that:

(10.a) While keshi is a full-fledged conjunction, ke is an

adverb in the process of becoming a conjunction,

b) The change from an adverb to a conjunction is accompanied by movement from the post-subject to the pre-subject position, and

c) The movement from the post-subject to the pre-subject position is a process of grammaticalization for the conjunctive function of an adverb.

IV. From Conjunctive Adverbs to Conjunctions as a Process of Grammaticalization

As a result of the comparison of ke with keshi in terms of their semantic content, syntactic behavior and discourse function, it is postulated in (10) above that ke is in the process of becoming a conjunction and that the process can be regarded as an instance of grammaticalization of the conjunctive function in discourse. In order to view it as a grammaticalizing process, however, the present state must be able to accommodate some of the synchronic consequences of grammaticalization. Indeed, it does. Below are some of the more important of such characteristics that are relevant to our discussion. They are given in (11) - (14), recomposited from Heine et al, 1991, Chapter 8.

(11) Overlapping: There is always a stage where the preceding and the following structures coexist as optional variants, before the former completely gives way to the latter.

The conjunctive ke and the adverbial ke overlap to some degree. In the post-subject position, ke can serve either as an adverb or as a conjunction. On the other hand, the pre-subject and the post-subject positions are variant slots for the conjunction.

(12) Asymmetry Between Cognitive and Linguistic Structures: Grammaticalization is the result of conceptual manipulation. Cognitive restructuring therefore precedes linguistic change. In particular, morphological and syntactic behaviors are likely to lag behind the more progressive semantic reanalysis, and quite often they represent vacuous relics of the older semantic situation.

The conjunctive ke again fits this situation very nicely. Its semantic reanalysis has separated the conjunctive from the adverbial, but syntactically the conjunctive is still partially like the adverbial. We might also argue that morphologically more substantial keshi is separating itself from ke to function as a conjunction. In fact, however, the use of ke in the pre-subject position is a very recent innovation, which started long after keshi has been used as a conjunction in the clause initial position.

(13) Decategorization and Recategorization: Grammaticalization

can be described as a process involving loss in linguistic substance (categorial status, semantic complexity, syntactic variability, phonological substance, etc.). This loss, however, is often compensated by gains in other areas through recategorization.

The conjunctive ke, regardless of its position, has lost a great deal in its semantic complexity (of the adverbial meanings), categorial status as an adverb, though not in syntactic variability or phonological substance. It also gained somewhat in its categorial status as a conjunction (though not firmly established yet) and as such in its semantic content to some degree.

(14) Grammaticalization Chain: The term 'refers to what happens on the way from lexeme to grammatical form.' It describes a chain of forms/concepts where the two ends represent traditional categories and where adjacent links of the chain share more properties than non-adjacent ones. This chain is a result of grammaticalization.

The conjunctive ke and the adverbial ke are clearly two of the links of a chain which covers the traditional categories of conjunction and adverb. They share properties of occurring in the post-subject position and expressing the adverbial meaning of 'focusing' on the following structure. On the other hand, keshi shares the post-subject position with both uses of ke, yet it has much less of the adverbial meaning of 'focusing'.

In fact, it is quite easy to identify similar sets of adverbs and conjunctions in Mandarin. While the adverb buguo and the conjunction buguo in (3) above don't seem to enter this relationship, many others do, such as jiu and jiushi, dan and danshi, etc. Below, we cite a few examples to illustrate the first pair.

(15) Jiushi As Adverb:

a) Wo jiushi yao shuo, shei ye guanbuzhao.
I JUST want say, who also none-of-anyone's business
'I just want to say it and it's none of anybody's business.'

b) Wuli jiushi ta yige ren. (Beida, 1982:294)
house-in ONLY he one-M person
'He is alone in the house.'

(16) Jiushi As Conjunction:

a) Jiushi ni dasi wo, wo ye bu qu.
EVEN-IF you kill I, I also not go.

'Even if you kill me, I wouldn't go anyway.'

b) Weile baowei zuguo, jiushi xishengle
for protect motherland, Even-IF sacrifice-LE

shengming ye zaisuobuxi. (Beida, 1982:294)
life also not-to-grudge

'To protect the motherland, it is worthwhile to give one's life.'

Again, we find the adverbial jiushi is semantically richer than its conjunctive counterpart. The adverbial jiushi in (15.a) has the meaning of 'with determination' and the one in (15.b) means 'only'. On the other hand, the conjunctive jiushi in (16) has just one meaning 'even if' (Beida, 1982:294). But, even this meaning looks suspect. Upon a closer examination, one easily discovers that the meaning does not completely come from the conjunctive jiushi. It comes, at least, partially from the ye in the next clause because they co-occur for that meaning. In fact, one may even claim that jiushi is semantically empty. For this claim, there is some evidence in the following fact: Omission of jiushi from (16) doesn't result in any reduction of the force of 'even if', while the absence of ye would greatly reduce it. The version without jiushi for (16) would only seem to lack continuity between the jiushi-clause and its preceding one. In the case of (16.a), the version san jiushi would not be able to indicate that the remark follows naturally from a preceding context, linguistic or otherwise.

We now illustrate jiu in its different functions in the following:

(17) Jiu As Adverb:

a) Liangsui de shihou, wo jiu chengle gu'er. (Beida, 1982:289)
age-two DE time, I SOON become-LE orphan
'As early as two years of age, I became an orphan.'

b) Wo jiu xihuan youyong. (Beida, 1982:290)
I JUST like swimming.
'I just like swimming.'

(18) Jiu As Conjunction:

a) Zhangfu ji youle kekaode shouru, yijia ren jiu
husband if have-LE reliable income, family person JIU

neng heheqiqide guo rizi. (Fang, 1992:366)
can peacefully pass day

'Now that the husband has a steady income, the family can live a peaceful life.'

b) Jiran ta yao kao, na jiu rang ta kao ba. (Fang, 1992:367)
if he want test, then JIU let him test BA
'If he wants to take the test, let him take it.'

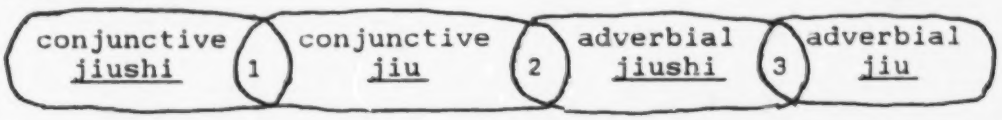
c) Yaoshi ni lai, wo jiu gen ni qu.
if you come, I JIU with you go
'If you come, I'll go with you.'

Likewise, there is a wide distinction between the adverbial and the conjunctive jiu. The adverb in (17.a) carries a semantic content of 'sooner than usual or expected' and the one in (17.b) has a meaning of 'being one and the only'. And there are at least four other major meanings for the adverb (Beida, 1982:289-298). On the other hand, the conjunctive jiu in (18) has only one meaning: 'inferred cause-effect sequence' (Fang, 1992:366-7). Furthermore, unlike the conjunctive jiushi, which is deletable in the examples in (16), the conjunctive jiu is not deletable. What is deletable is rather the conjunction-like ji in (a), jiran in (b) and yaoshi in (c) in the preceding clause. Though all three of them are translatable as 'if', the meaning of 'if' actually comes from jiu.

A grammaticalization chain may thus be formulated for jiu and jiushi as follows:

(19) Grammaticalization Chain for Jiu and jiushi

CONJUNCTION<----------->ADVERB



LESS SEMANTIC CONTENT<----------->MORE SEMANTIC CONTENT

In the diagram, the area marked with '1' represents the pre-subject position and the one with '3' represents the post-subject position while area '2' represents an impoverished but discernible semantic content that is common to the conjunctive and the adverbial. A similar chain can be easily formulated for ke and keshi.

Such grammaticalization chains, we believe, more realistically and more accurately describe the synchronic grammatical categories of adverb and conjunction in Mandarin Chinese. We also believe that many other adverbial conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs can likewise be described in this way.

V. Pedagogical Implications:

Following from the findings in the preceding sections, there are some pedagogical implications that may contribute to techniques in the Teaching of Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL). We discuss two of such implications below.

A. Teach adverbs as conjunctions when their conjunctive function dominates their adverbial function.

The conjunctive functions of adverbs have largely been disregarded in TCFL. For example, the English notion in (20.a) is taught to be expressed as (20.b) in Chinese.

(20.a) If you come, I will go.
b) Yaoshi ni lai, wo jiu qu.

If the student asks why there is the jiu in the second clause, the answer is usually that it translates the English auxiliary will. This answer is at best misleading, if not completely wrong. Without belaboring how this will should be expressed in Chinese, we just point out that the jiu actually is the major component of the conjunctive pair 'yaoshi...jiu...' Evidence can be found in the fact that yaoshi is deletable but jiu is not:

(20.b') 0 Ni lai, wo jiu qu.
b") ?Yaoshi ni lai, wo 0 qu.

B. Stress the fact that in Chinese crucial conjunctive functions reside in markers in the main (usually, the second) clause rather than in the subordinate (usually, the first) one.

While most conjunctions in English occur in the subordinate clause which may precede or follow the main clasue, their Chinese counterparts occur in the main clause which in most cases follows the subordinate one. This fact can be easily confirmed by the examples we have so far studied. In fact, even in paired conjunctions, the second member is not deletable but the first one is. E.g.

(21.a) Ta budan hen congming erqie zhen nenggan.
(s)he NOT-ONLY very intelligent BUT-ALSO real capable
'(S)he is not only very intelligent but also extremely resourceful.'

b) Ta 0 hen congming erqie zhen nenggan.
c) ?Ta budan hen congming 0 zhen nenggan.

These two points actually go hand in hand. A strict literal translation of the English conjunction in the subordinate clause often forces a skewed interpretation of the corresponding conjunction in the Chinese main clause.

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